EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

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Over the last decade, the practice of human rights has taken on increasing complexity in Canada and elsewhere around the world, in large part because of the way human rights claims are understood. There are times when the claim to a right of one individual or group directly affects the claim to the human rights of another group. Such competing human rights claims can be played out in many places, from the classroom to workplaces, to the international stage, wherever individuals or groups actively claim the recognition of rights that may interfere with the access to rights of others. How do individuals, groups, organizations, governments, human rights commissions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academics approach this multi-faceted issue?

In March 2010, The *Ontario Human Rights Commission* (OHRC) in partnership with the *York Centre for Public Policy and Law* at York University in Toronto hosted a policy dialogue, *Towards a Policy Framework to Address Competing Human Rights Claims*, which sought both to inform and shift how differently situated people from across society – ordinary citizens, journalists, human rights lawyers and advocates, academics – think about competing human rights claims. The vision for the policy dialogue was to bring leading stakeholders from a wide range of affected groups – faith communities, persons with disabilities, LGBT groups, other minority groups, all sorts of NGOs and civil society organizations – together with academics who work on rights conflicts from a wide range of perspectives, human rights practitioners and lawyers and people from human rights commissions across Canada to talk about when human rights claims collide, confront or compete with one another. The policy dialogue was designed as a major step towards the formulation of a new policy for the OHRC in the area of competing human rights claims. It included sessions on a range of topics related to competing rights claims including philosophical perspectives, legal frameworks, particular contexts such as those involving disability, religion, sexual orientation, and gender, the limitations on court adjudication, social policy perspectives, the media's portrayal of and role in competing rights claims, and examples of civil society approaches.

The essays in this special issue of Canadian Diversity are the product of *Towards a Policy Framework to Address Competing Human Rights Claims*. The contributors were all participants in the policy dialogue and offered substantial insights into the nature of competing human rights claims and how to move the discussion forward in the framing of a policy in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada for addressing competing human rights claims.

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